

Guidance on handling mercury switches in Volvos and Audis

The mercury switches in Volvo and Audi convenience lights are unique in that the mercury usually is encased in glass rather than metal. Special care should be taken when removing these switches to avoid breaking the glass and spilling the mercury. **DO NOT MIX GLASS SWITCHES IN THE COLLECTION BUCKET WITH THE METAL-ENCASED MERCURY SWITCHES FROM OTHER VEHICLES.** If you do and the glass breaks, the entire bucket of switches will be contaminated and must then be handled as hazardous waste. To avoid this costly result, manage glass switches as follows:

- Put the switch in a plastic bag.
- Put the bag and switch in a rigid plastic container that can be sealed. A recycled food storage container with a screw top or snap-on lid will do.
- Other glass-encased switches can be stored in the same container. Use sawdust, cat litter or other packing material to minimize the risk of breakage.
- Store the container in the 5-gallon screw-top bucket provided by the DEP (see page Hg 11).

Volvo ceased using mercury convenience light switches after model year 1991. Prior to that, the switches were used in Volvo engine and luggage compartment lights at least as far back as model year 1975. You also may find mercury switches in make-up mirror lights on 1986 through 1991 Volvos. Audi reportedly used the glass mercury switches in engine compartment lights on its 1992 and earlier vehicles.